

## Exchange With Reporters in Portland, Maine January 25, 2002

### *Situation in the Middle East*

Q. Mr. President, are you consider cutting off ties to Yasser Arafat, sir?

*The President.* I am disappointed in Yasser Arafat. He must make a full effort to rout out terror in the Middle East. In order for there to be peace, we've got to rout out terror. And ordering up weapons that were intercepted on a boat headed toward—headed for that part of the world is not part of fighting terror; that's enhancing terror. And obviously, we're very disappointed.

Q. We're told that you thought his explanation was insulting, sir.

*The President.* I never said that.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:25 p.m. while touring the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Tahoma* at the International Marine Terminal. In his remarks, the President referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

## Remarks at Southern Maine Technical College in Portland January 25, 2002

Thank you all very much for coming. It's nice to be back in, I guess, my second home. I was telling your fine Governor, Angus King—and thank you for being here, Angus. I'm so honored you're here. He said, "Are you going to come back next summer?" I said, "I knew I should have made my bed last time I was here." [Laughter] I'm not so sure my mother is going to invite me back, but I hope she does. [Laughter] Maine's a fabulous State, and as the Governor knows, it's full of such decent people. And thank you for coming out for such a warm greeting. I've got some things on my mind, and I want to share them with the good people of Maine.

First, I want to tell you, I've got a great Cabinet. I'm so proud of the way our team has responded. A leader is only good as his team. I brought two members of my Cabinet with me: Secretary Mineta, and when I picked him out of the ranks, he was a—he served the previous administration as the Commerce Secretary. He's a proud Democrat, but he showed America

really what he is: He's a proud American, and he's done a fabulous job. And I knew I needed somebody who knew something about local government to run the Homeland Security Office, somebody who had been an administrator, a chief executive officer, and somebody who could organize a massive task. And I picked the right man when it came to the former Governor of Pennsylvania, my very close friend Tom Ridge.

And one thing the world is learning, something I already knew, we've got a fabulous military run by fine people. Admiral Loy, thank you for your leadership. I appreciate it.

I was supposed to bring two other folks with me today. I think you've heard of them: Snowe and Collins. They missed the flight—[laughter]—for good reason. They were working on behalf of the people of Maine. They had some votes to cast. But I will tell you, these two fine ladies are good to work with, strong for the support of the State of Maine, and great patriots.

I'm proud of their service to our country, and I want to thank you for sending them to Washington, DC. And I know a Congressman—one of the two Congressmen from your State, John Baldacci, is here. John, where are you? Thank you for coming. I appreciate you being here as well.

First, I want to talk about the Coast Guard. Now, you probably think I've had a sweet spot in my heart for the Coast Guard because when I spend the night at 41's house down the coast, I wake up and see the cutter sitting out there. [Laughter] Well, has some good reason why I support the Coast Guard so strong. But I saw how the Coast Guard has responded after 9/11, and I know how important the Coast Guard is for the safety and security and the well-being of our American citizens.

This is a fine group of people who don't get nearly as much appreciation from the American people as they should. And I'm here today to say thanks on behalf of all the citizens who appreciate the long hours you put in, the daring rescues you accomplish, and the fine service you provide to our country. Oh yes, we're on guard in America.

But the Coast Guard has got more missions than that. Admiral Loy told me that right off the coast of my State of Texas, the Coast Guard enacted one of the largest marijuana busts in history just the other day—right off the east coast. The Coast Guard chopper, the Coast Guard crew from Air Station Cape Cod—coast guardsmen who I had a chance to thank personally today—rescued five fishermen from a 74-foot fishing vessel called the *Covered Wagon*, that sank in heavy seas. Five human souls returned back to land because of the bravery of people who wear the Coast Guard uniform.

Such bravery is not an isolated event. After all, this story was repeated 4,000 times last year. The Coast Guard, the men and women who accomplish the mission, seized over 60 tons of cocaine last year. They responded to over 11,000 oilspills.

They're working around the globe with the Department of Defense. Today, the Coast Guard is conducting maritime intercept operations in the Persian Gulf and providing waterside security in Guantanamo Bay.

Earlier today I had the pleasure of going on board the *Tahoma*, the Coast Guard vessel that was the command vessel on site in New York Harbor the day the enemy hit us. They stayed there for 40 days, on alert 24 hours a day, making sure that not only did traffic flow smoothly but the people were safe.

When it comes to securing our homeland and helping people along the coast, the Coast Guard has got a vital and significant mission. And therefore, the budget that I send to the United States Congress will have the largest increase in spending for the Coast Guard in our Nation's history. We must make sure that our Coast Guard has got a modern fleet of vessels. We must make sure that port security is as strong as possible. We must make sure there's additional operating money available for the extended missions of the Coast Guard. And we must make sure those who wear our uniforms are well paid.

I'll have other priorities in my budget. One of the biggest priorities, of course, is to make sure the homeland is secure. You know, none of us ever dreamt that we'd have a two-front war to fight, one overseas and one at home. But we do. That's reality, and as a result, we must respond and continue to respond and stay on alert and help defend America. The biggest chore I have, my biggest job, is to make sure our homeland is secure.

Every morning I go into the Oval Office—and what a thrill it is to walk into that grand office—and I sit at the desk that other Presidents have sat at, Roosevelt, Reagan. And I look at the—I look at a threat assessment. The enemy still wants to hit us, and therefore this Nation must do everything in our power to prevent it. And so when I speak to the Congress next Tuesday night and I submit my budget,

one of the top priorities will be the security of the homeland. I've asked for a doubling of homeland security funds to \$38 billion a year, money that will be spent to make sure that the Federal Government and the State Government and the local governments—and I know some mayors are here—work in a cooperative way to make sure that our first-responders, the police, the fire, the emergency medical teams, have the best equipment, the best training, the best ability to communicate with each other to protect the American people.

In this budget, we will make sure that our health systems are more modern and more responsive, that we stockpile needed medicines so that they'll be easily accessible at the call of a Governor or the call of a mayor, that we've got money in the budget for research and development, to stay ahead of what the enemy may try to use, that our public health systems have got the best communications possible and the ability to respond quickly.

In this budget, under Norm Mineta's leadership, we are securing our airports, we're modernizing the equipment, we're sending more people into our airports to make sure that travelers get the best service and the most safe flight humanly possible.

And under this budget, we're spending \$11 billion for controlling of our borders. It is so important for our Nation to work with our friends to the north, Canada, and our friend to the south, Mexico, on border initiatives—that, one, doesn't tie up commerce but, on the other hand, prevents illegal drugs, terrorists, arms from flowing across our border.

Tom Ridge went up to Canada—and I know the Governor will appreciate this, since you've got such a huge border with Canada—he went up with Canada, and we're talking about a new border initiative with our friends. We're analyzing every aspect of the border and making sure that the effort is seamless, the communication is real, that the enforcement is strong.

And so, to this end, I've got a 29-percent increase in the budget of the INS, to make sure we modernize our reporting data, to know who comes in our country and who leaves our country. Forty percent—40 percent—the INS estimates that 40 percent of the people who are here illegally have overstayed their visa. Forty percent of the people who are here illegally came because of the generosity of America—were given a period of time in which they could stay, and then they didn't leave. And one of the things we want to make sure of is we find the 40 percent to make sure they're not part of some Al Qaida network that wants to hit the United States.

And so we're looking; we're listening; we're following every single lead. I'm proud of our FBI. We've got a fine man running the FBI, named Robert Mueller. When Mueller first came in, the main task of the FBI was running down crime, which is great—white-collar crime or watching for spies. And those are all important missions. But I'm proud to report to you now the number one mission of the Federal Bureau of Investigation is to prevent another attack on America. We're going to add agents onto the payroll. We're going to add agents on our payroll, all aimed to making sure that not only do we find leads, but when we find a lead, we chase them down as quickly as possible.

There is nothing more important for me and the Federal Government, to do everything within the Constitution of the United States—and I emphasize we will not let the terrorists tear down our Constitution—we will do everything within the Constitution to protect the innocent Americans, the innocent moms and dads, the people who yearn for freedom and normalcy in their life. We're working overtime, and I'm proud of the American people, and I'm proud of the people who are working to protect the American people. We're going to beef up Customs. We're on alert.

But I want to assure you, I know this: that the best way to secure freedom in

America, the best way to make sure we're a peaceful nation, the best way to ensure that our children can grow up in a world that a lot of us older folks grew up in—one that was pretty calm, pretty peaceful at home, one that was secure—the best way to accomplish this dream and mission is to find the enemy where they hide, to rout them out, and to bring them to justice. And that's exactly what our Nation is going to do.

It wasn't all that long ago that I asked the military to perform a vital function. We've been at this for about 4½ months. Oh, for some people it may seem like a long time, but it's not very long when you think about the magnitude of the task. But in 4½ months, we've accomplished a lot—we really have—because we've got such a fabulous military. We routed out the Taliban. You see, I told the world—I told the world that if you harbor a terrorist, if you hide a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, you're a terrorist, and you're going to pay a price.

Our men and women in uniform are brave, and they're skilled, and they must have all our support. So the budget I asked for to the United States Congress has got the most significant increase in military spending in the last 20 years. The price of victory is well worth it.

And you know what makes me so proud of America? In the process of holding the Taliban accountable, in the process of defending freedom, our troops became liberators. We liberated women and children from the clutches of one of the most repressive regimes in the history of mankind. We rid women and children of the evils of the Taliban regime.

But I want to explain to the American people that we must be patient. We've just started, and there's a lot to do. We've entered into a dangerous phase of the first theater in the war against terror. And that is, we're now hunting them down. We've got teams on the ground that are going cave to cave. You see, this enemy is one

that's willing to send their young on suicide missions while they, themselves, hide in caves. But there's no cave deep enough for the reach of the American military. We're patient; we're deliberate; and we're going to bring them to justice, one person at a time.

I want to remind you all that our mission is not one person, our mission is terror wherever it exists. I'm proud we've got a strong coalition, a coalition that our country leads, a coalition bound up to protect freedom, a coalition that I hope will take every step necessary to find terrorists where they live and help us bring them to justice.

You know, when the enemy hit us, they must have not known what they were doing. I like to tell people, "They must have been watching too much TV, because they didn't understand America." [*Laughter*] They were watching some of those shows, that one can get the wrong impression about how materialistic we might be, how selfish we might be as a people. But that's not the way we are. Not only are we patient and determined and resolute to defend values we love, starting with the value of freedom, this good Nation understands that in order to fight evil, you do so with acts of kindness and goodness.

People say to me, "What can I do, Mr. President, to help?" And my answer is, if you want to fight evil, do something good in your neighborhood. If you want to fight evil, be a part of the goodness of the country by loving a child who may have lost a parent, by walking across the street to a shut-in and say, "Somebody cares about you." If you want to be a part of the war against terror, go to your church or synagogue and mosque and ask the question, "How can we love a neighbor in need," and then feed somebody. If you want to be a part of the war on terror, help a teacher; get involved with your public education; mentor a child.

You see, the great strength of America is not only our military. The true strength of America is the million acts of kindness

and decency and compassion that define the soul and character of our country on a daily basis.

No, when the enemy struck us, little did they realize that out of the terrible evil would come such good. Our job is not only to win the war overseas; our job is not only to protect the homeland, to make sure we can live peacefully; our job is to fight evil on a daily basis by loving a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. And that's what's happening all across the

country. And for those of you who do that, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. And I want to thank you for giving me a chance to be the President of the greatest nation on the face of the Earth.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. in the Hutchinson Union Building. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

## Statement on Disaster Assistance for Victims of the Eruption of Mount Nyiragongo

*January 25, 2002*

On January 17, the people of Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo suffered from an enormous natural disaster. Many homes, shops, roads, and schools were buried, and many lives were lost or disrupted by the flow of molten lava from Mount Nyiragongo. The Congolese people have shown enormous spirit and resilience, already returning to the land where their homes once stood to recover and rebuild.

I commend President Kabila of Congo and President Kagame of Rwanda for working together to address the humanitarian needs of the people of Goma who have been hurt by this volcanic eruption. The United States will help the victims of this

disaster, and we have already allocated up to \$3 million for relief efforts. I have sent a team of experts from the U.S. Agency for International Development to the region to assess how this aid can be directed most effectively. At the same time, I have ordered the immediate dispatch of two relief flights carrying blankets, shelter material, and water storage equipment to support the most urgent needs of the Congolese people. The United States will continue to work closely with the international community to help those affected by this disaster to rebuild their town and their lives.

## The President's Radio Address

*January 26, 2002*

Good morning. A few days from now I will go before Congress to report on the state of the Union and lay out my priorities for the coming year and beyond. These priorities reflect a single, overarching commit-

ment to enhance the security of America and its people.

Government's responsibilities begin with the defense of our Nation. Our fight against terrorism began in Afghanistan, but it will not end there. America must not rest until